

A photograph of two young women standing outdoors in a natural, grassy setting. They are wearing traditional clothing, consisting of red short-sleeved shirts and white wrap-around skirts. Their hair is styled in a traditional manner, with large, vibrant red flowers tucked into it. The woman on the left has a small blue flower and a purple earring. The woman on the right has a small yellow flower. Both have a small white dot on their foreheads. The background is a blurred natural landscape with dry grass and trees.

# ***Hairstyle***

**Panorama of the Tribal World**

Bharati Debi  
Anshu Prokash Nandan





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27, Jawaharlal Nehru Road  
Calcutta 700 016

Published in November 2000

ISBN No: 81-85579-60-1

**Published by**

Director  
Anthropological Survey of India  
27, Jawaharlal Nehru Road  
Calcutta 700 016

**Printed by**

Pressco  
1/27 Prince Gulam Mohammad Road  
Calcutta 700 026. India  
Phone No. 464 0541/1026  
e-mail: [pressco@giascl01.vsnl.net.in](mailto:pressco@giascl01.vsnl.net.in)

**Price: Rs. 50.00; \$ 15**

## FOREWORD

This volume is an outcome of the many years of fieldwork among various groups by successive teams of anthropologists aided by the members of the Photography unit of the Anthropological Survey of India. Hairstyle is more than just a statement of fashion, it embodies aspects of aesthetics, skills, customs and indicates in many ways, the social-structural dimensions of society. Tradition, heritage and social identity are also embodied through hairstyle as is sometimes, individual identity or status within a social group. In other words, hairstyle is a marker of many aspects and tells us about the people. Hairstyle tells us about the mind-set of people, permits us to glimpse into the myriad world of ideas and concepts and helps us attain a more complete understanding of groups vis-a-vis others.

I congratulate the authors and the team which assisted the authors for this volume that I am sure will be a prized one.

**R.K. Bhattacharya**  
Director

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# Introduction

A cursory glance at the famous bronze statuette of Harappa, frescoes of Ajanta, images of Khajuraho or Konark evinces an appreciable number of detailed depiction of human figures. The skillful manoeuvring of hair received equal importance from the artists along with the gestures of human body. The art of hairdo drew attention of writers and poets. It impressed them so much that this art has found a place in many great literary works of all times.


Lifestyle of the tribal people of India shows a wide range of hairdo. The hairstyle in many tribes is emblematic of age, sex, social rank or civil condition of individuals.

Both clean shaving and part shaving are practised by the tribal people. Front shaving is practised by a number of tribes, namely Kuvi Kondh, Bhatra, Dhurwa, Yanadi and others. They themselves do the shaving irrespective of sex with the help of a glass piece, shell, razor or knife, as available. Utilization of the services of a barber is prohibited as a custom in many societies like the Kamars of Madhya Pradesh.

The knowledge of taking proper care of hair varies from society to society. A kind of locally available alkaline earth is used by a number of tribes for cleaning hair. They identify the particular type of earth with the help of their traditional knowledge. The tribes of Bastar and the Chik Baraiks of Ranchi refer to this kind of earth as *manmitti* and *chiknamitti* respectively. The Bhils use mud, milk or soap for the purpose. The Nicobarese apply a handful of grated coconut to clean the hair. Soap or shampoo for cleaning hair is a recent introduction among many tribes.

Oil of coconut, mustard, castor, sesame, *karanj*, *mohowa* or *kusum* are applied on the hair by a number of tribes all over India. The Baigas of Madhya Pradesh or the pastoralist Todas of the Nilgiri Hills use *ghee* for lustre.

Hair is combed very softly and made free from unwanted clots. Wooden or bamboo combs are used for the purpose. Plastic comb has also been introduced nowadays.



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ONGE  
Andaman & Nicobar  
Islands.



Peppercorn type of hair

The Great Andamanese, Onges, Jarawas and the Sentinelese of the Andaman Group of Islands have peppercorn type of hair which cannot be combed due to its maximum elasticity. The hair is shaved on all sides leaving the scalp intact.





BONDO  
Orissà

The Bondo women of Orissa keep their hair clean shaved from babyhood till death. The men, however, are not clean shaven.

Dread of sorcery or witchcraft makes them cautious to the disposal of the hair so carefully shaven.



Unmarried women of the Angami Nagas keep their head shaven. The married women have long hair.

Widows, who are unwilling to remarry, in the Nocte Naga society, cut their hair short.



ANGAMI NAGA  
Manipur



ANGAMI NAGA  
Manipur



Stratification in the Wancho society is easily perceptible from the hairstyle of their women. Women of the commoners (*Wangpen*) have to crop their hair, while women of other three sections (namely *Wangham*, *Wangsa* and *Wangsu*) keep long hair.

Again, the women of only the chief's section (*Wangham*) encase the long hair in a covering made of dried leaves (*khoton*).

There is, however, no change of hairstyle in men on the basis of their social position.



WANCHO  
Arunachal Pradesh

The Adis and Miniyongs of Arunachal Pradesh do not allow to grow hair beyond two or three inches in length.



MINIYONG  
Arunachal Pradesh



ADI  
Arunachal Pradesh

Among the Adis close cropping of hair is done all around the head, by lifting the hair on the blade of a knife and chopping it with a stick irrespective of sex.



The Todas of the Nilgiri Hills follow a particular type of hairdo technically known as ringlet curl. The hair is parted in the middle and gathered on two sides. Elongated bunch of hair is divided into many thin strands. Each strand is twisted between the palms. Ghee is used for securing the twist as well as for lustre of hair.



TODA  
Tamil Nadu

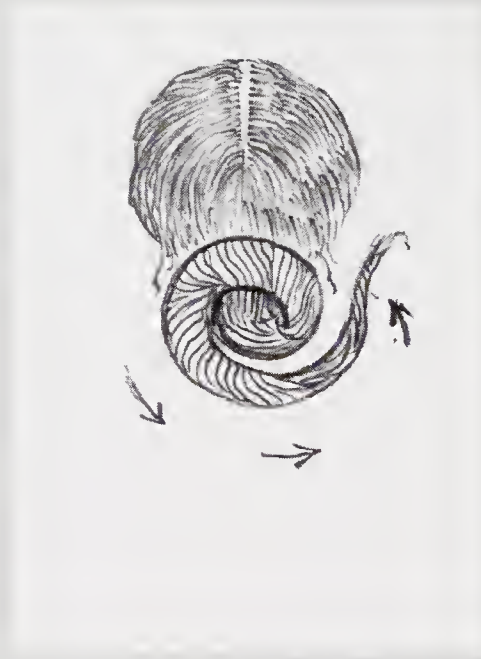


The Siddi women of Gujarat allow a portion of their hair to get twisted with a ribbon along the hairline . Two ends of the ribbon are joined at the nape behind.



SIDDI  
Gujarat





A bun resembling partly a 'french roll' is a style which has survived through the ages because of its simplicity and elegance. The Koyas, Bhatras, Kuvi Kondhs, Didayis, Murias, Santals and a number of other tribes inhabiting Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and parts of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra make this type of hairdo.

While making such a bun, hair is parted in the middle and drawn on one side either left or right. The entire bunch of hair is twisted and encircled anticlockwise round the root of torsion. The bunch of hair thus gets transformed into a ball. The ball is then pushed inside the layers of hair at the back of the crown and these layers act as a rift and secure the loose ball tight. Thus without any accessory a graceful chignon is formed in no time.



DHURWA  
Madhya Pradesh



BHATRA  
Madhya Pradesh





A Baiga woman gathers her elongated hair at the back of her head ; holds it in her left hand and encircles a cord round the bunch twice or thrice. Then the hair is folded upwards so as to cover the neck and secure it with the help of the cord.



BAIGA  
Madhya Pradesh



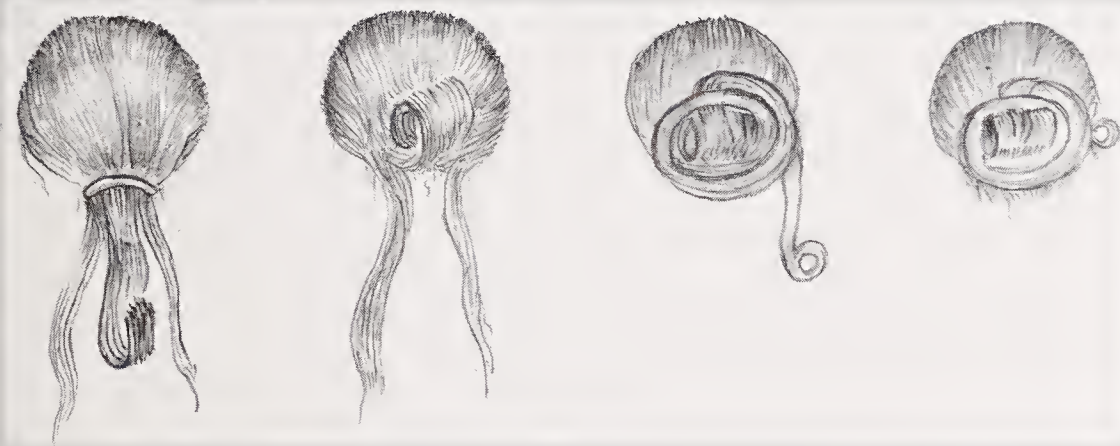


Use of frame is noticed among the Poi women of Mizoram. Long hair is drawn at the back in a bunch and tied with a small string. The bunch is then passed through the frame and divided into a number of strands so as to encircle the frame from all directions.

Poi  
Mizoram



Some tribes of Tripura like the Riangs and Kaipengs wear their long hair into a graceful chignon.



Hair is combed, parted centrally and drawn at the back of the head. A pony-tail is made and the entire bunch is divided into three unequal strands. The middle strand is the thickest of all and the right strand is the most slender one. The middle strand is flattened and rolled outward. The roll thus formed is fixed covering the base of the pony-tail with the help of hairpins. The left strand encircles the roll in anticlockwise direction and a knot is made on the top of the roll leaving the tail-end loose and hanging as a flap.

The right strand is flattened and a see-through roll is formed. The roll is fixed with the bun with a pin. The loose flap hides the point of joining with the main bun.



RIANG  
Tripura



Elongated hair is plaited. Three-stemmed plaits are very common where the whole hair is divided into three strands and intertwined with each other. Four-stemmed and multi-stemmed plaits are very rare.

A plait may hang centrally or there may be two plaits at the back on either side nearer to ears. A plait on the scalp is also visible.



KOYA  
Andhra Pradesh

Multiple plaits simultaneously at the centre and side are seen among the Garasias of Rajasthan.

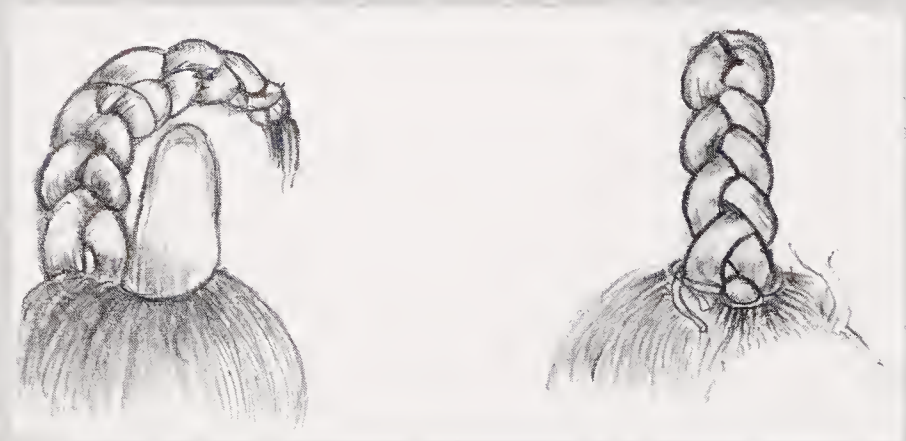
Plait is common among the Kunbis of Gujarat, Saharias of Rajasthan, Bhils of Madhya Pradesh, Sugalis of Karnataka, Konda Kapus, Bagatas and Koyas of Andhra Pradesh.





MATHURA  
Andhra Pradesh

A Mathura woman of Adilabad draws forward her long hair at the centre of the scalp and makes a tight-knitted three-stemmed plait. The plait is folded in the middle. A hard and slender peg is disguised between the folds and tied firmly at the base of the plait. The plait thus stands erect.







The Bhutia women of Sikkim grow their hair long. It is parted in the middle upto the nape. The hair is thus divided into two equal halves. Each half is gathered near the ear on either side. The strand of hair is further divided and intertwined to form a three-stemmed plait. Tassels are also used in the plaits.

The plaits are passed in opposite directions and are twisted several times over the head.

In the presence of a superior, Lepcha men and women always let their hair hang down as a mark of respect.



BHUTIA  
Sikkim





LAHAULA  
Himachal Pradesh

The Lahaula women divide their elongated hair into a good number of thin strands. Each strand is turned to a three-stemmed plait. The loose ends of all these plaits are gathered in order to terminate in a three-stemmed plait at the bottom.

Kaman Mishmi women wear the hair long. They do not part hair but draw it back into a pony-tail. Hair is then parted into two halves. Upper half is puffed and gathered into a ball and fixed with hairpins. Two plaits are made with the hair of the lower half. The plaits encircle the ball from two sides, meet at top and then pass above the puffed hair ball side by side upto the bottom. The whole bun thus made is neatly pinned and secured.



KAMAN MISHMI  
Arunachal Pradesh



Unlike the women, the men display little variation in hairstyle . Hair is either left loose or made into a knot. Placing of knot, however, is not uniform.



BIRHOR  
Bihar

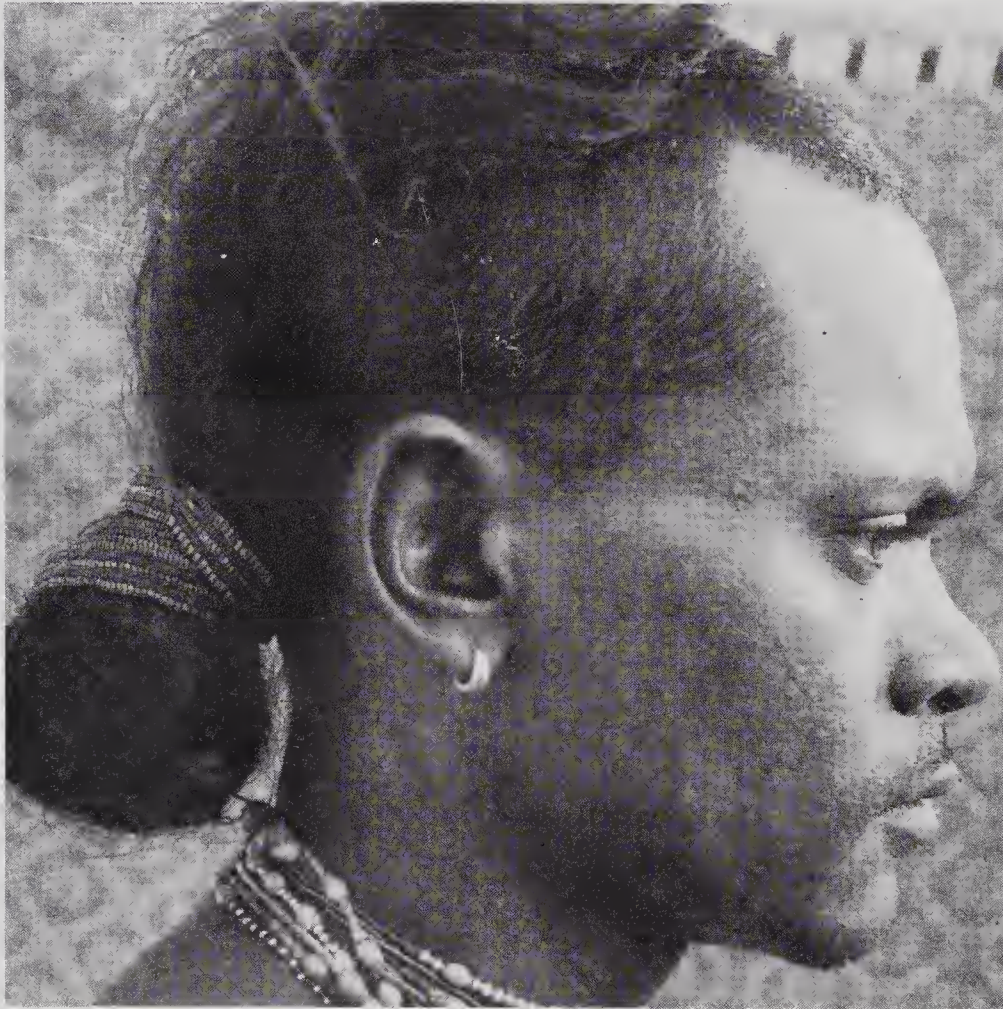


ORAON  
Bihar

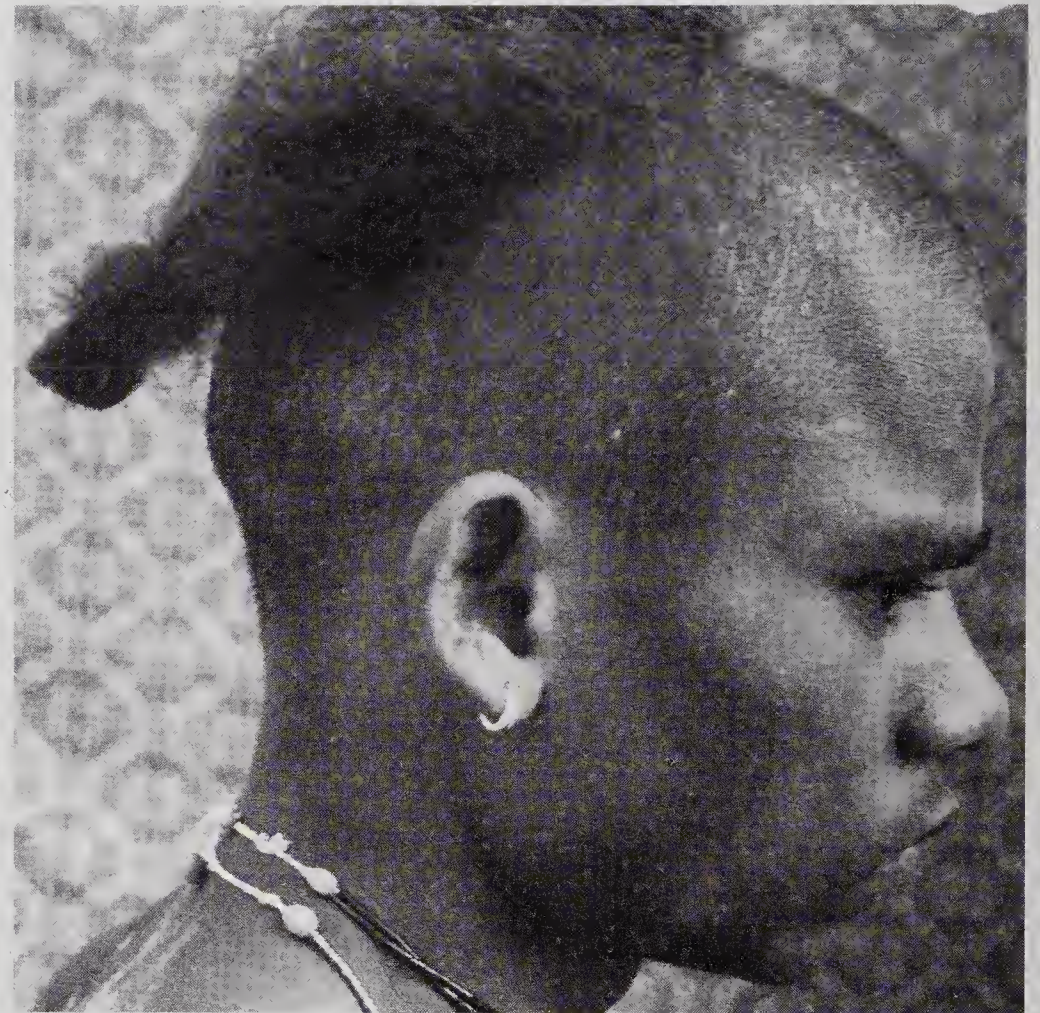


The Dhurwas of Bastar display a number of hairstyles. Most men shave their head all around leaving a tuft on the crown which is drawn into a knot.

Others are found with front of the head shaven. The hair at the back is allowed to grow and long hair is drawn into a knot at the nape. The knot is sometimes tied with a ribbon.



DHURWA  
Madhya Pradesh



DHURWA  
Madhya Pradesh

A few men allow only small tufts of hair to grow on the top centre of their otherwise shaven heads.

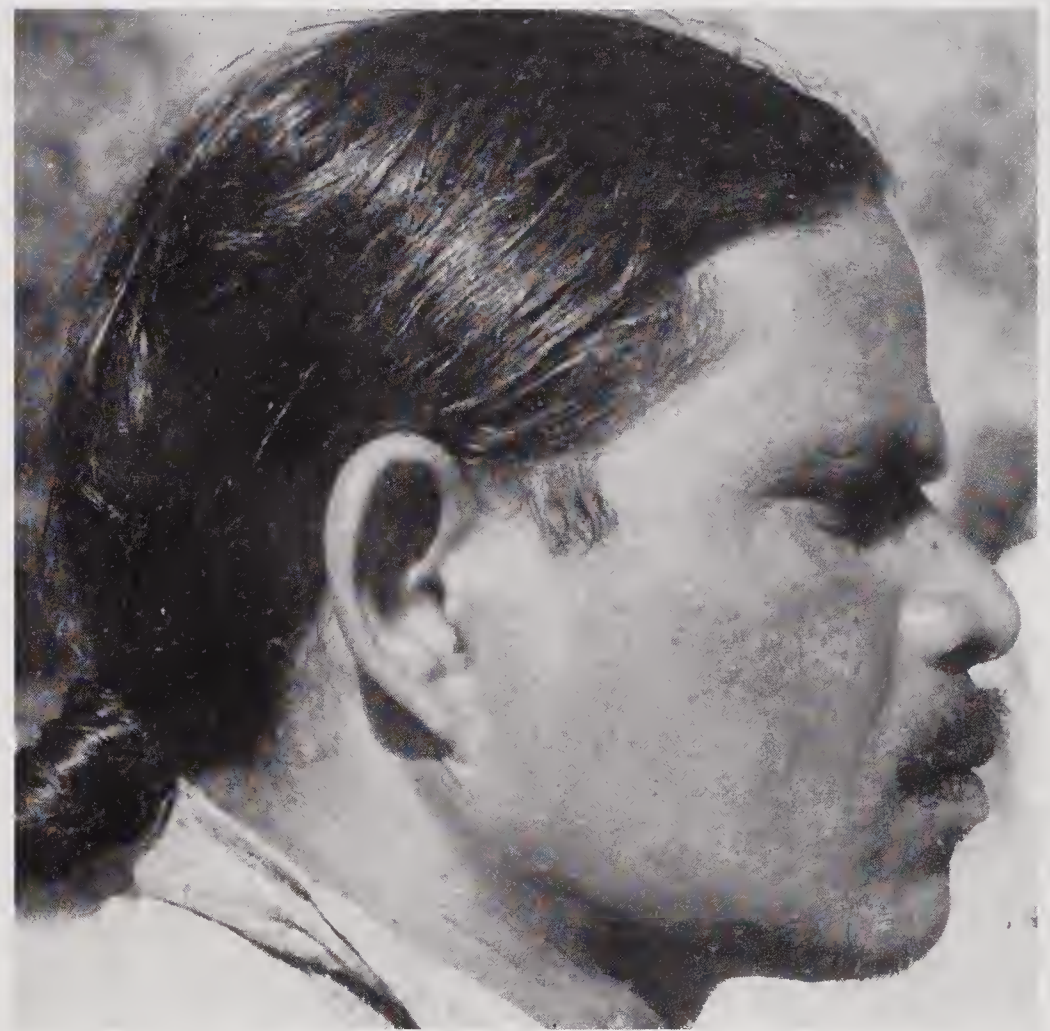
Yet others are seen to wear a long almost matted lock of hair, tied into a knot.





HAKKI PIKKI  
Karnataka

The nomadic Hakki Pikki men of Karnataka make a knot at the back with their long hair.

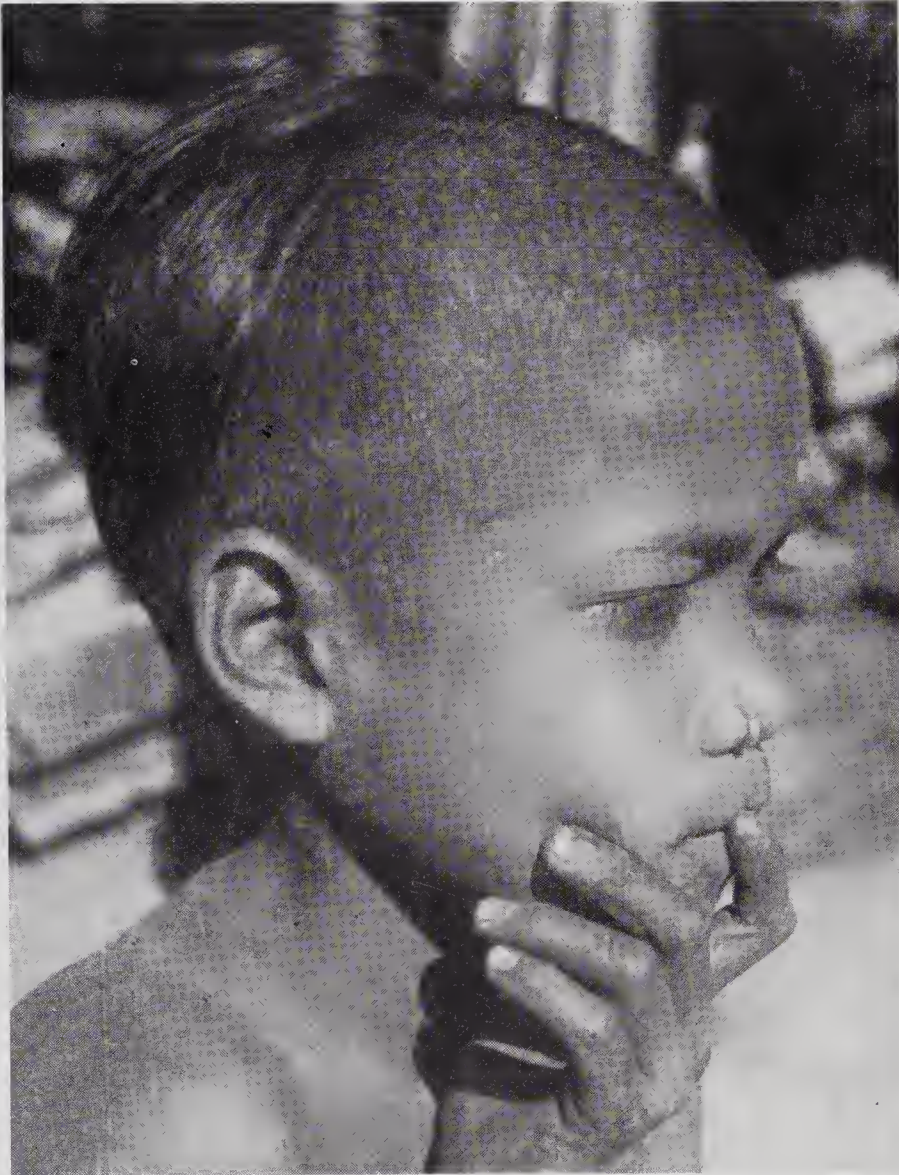


RAJA MURIA  
Madhya Pradesh

The Raja Muria men wear their hair long. The long hair is made into a knot and placed at the nape.



Head of a Kuvi Kondh baby is shaved during the first menstruation period of the mother after childbirth. From then onwards the frontal portion of the head is shaved periodically.



KUVI KONDH  
Orissa

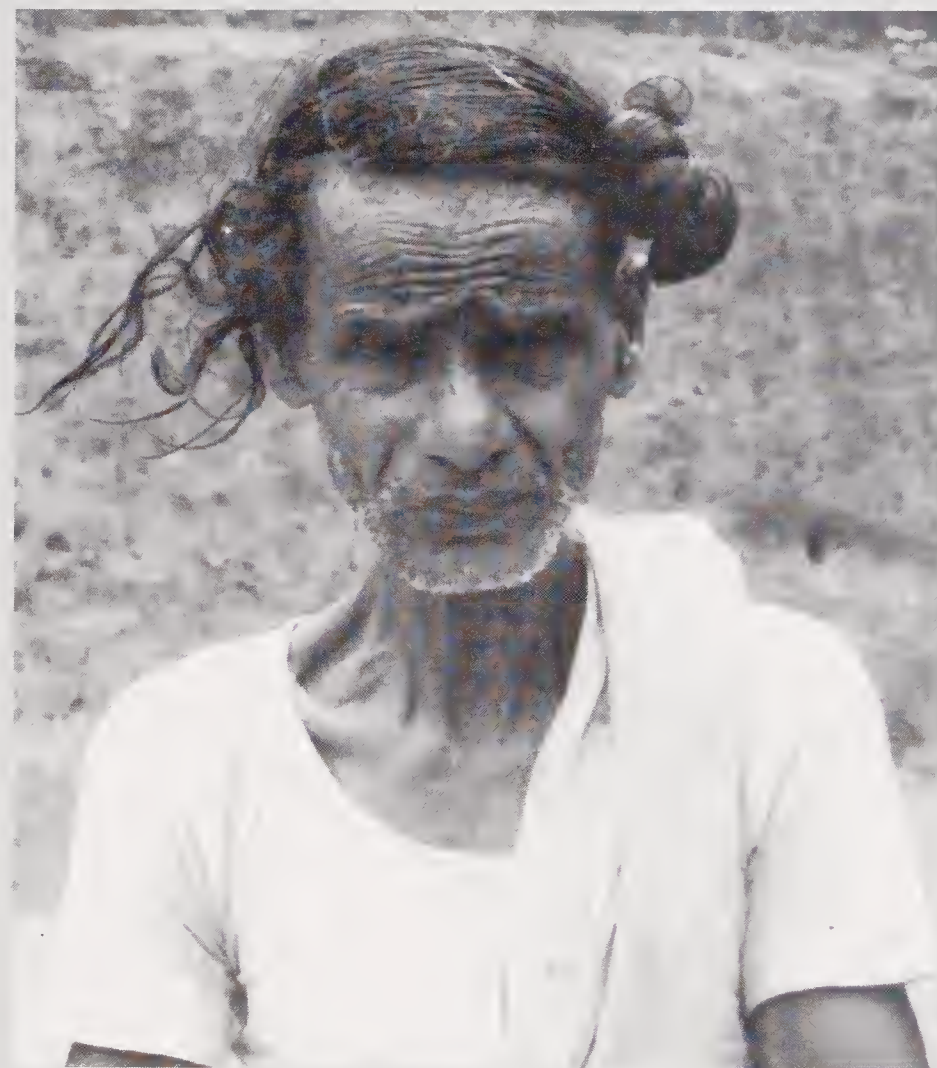
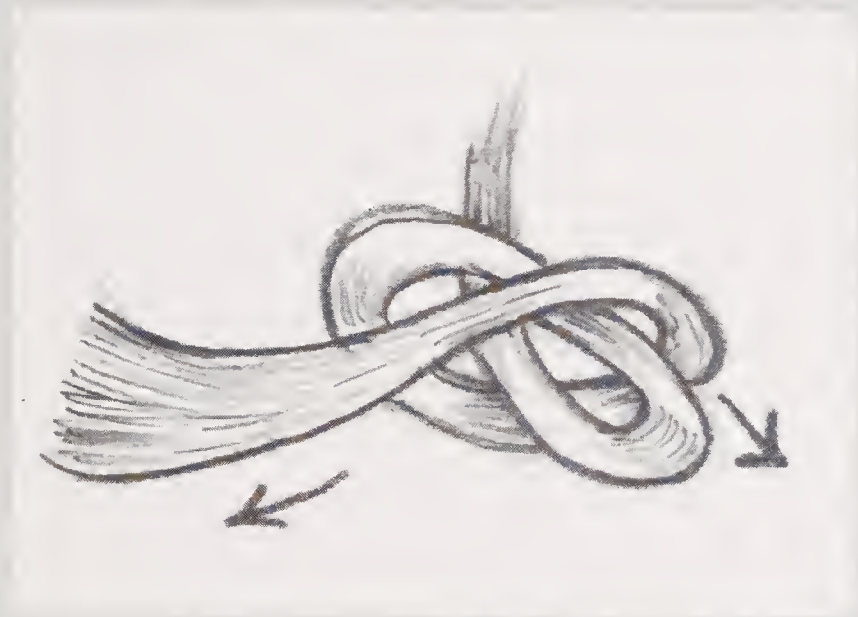


KUVI KONDH  
Orissa

An adult Kuvi Kondh man wears his hair long and ties it into a knot at the nape. This is the traditional way of hairstyle for males. The religious heads must follow this traditional style.

The young generation follows modern hairstyle and avoids the knot.





KURICHIYAN  
Kerala

An uncommon way of wearing their elongated hair is noticed among some men of the Kurichiyans of Kerala. The hair is parted at the right side. All the hair is pulled together on the left side and a knot is made resting a little up the left ear.



APATANI  
Arunachal Pradesh

The long hair is drawn on the scalp, plaited and a typical hair-knot is formed. It goes by the name *podum* among the Nishis of Arunachal Pradesh. A *podum* signifies coming of age. A boy starts wearing a *podum* at the age of sixteen or so.

A brass skewer or silver bodkin is stuck horizontally through the hair-knot.

A large knot protruding on the forehead is the speciality of a man's hairstyle among a number of Himalayan tribes like the Apatanis, Nishis and others.



NISHI  
Arunachal Pradesh



## **Acknowledgements**

Dr. R.K. Bhattacharya

Dr. J.K. Sarkar

Prof. (Smt.) K. Bhattacharya

Smt. Soma Biswas

Dr. Jyotirmoy Chakrabarty

Dr. Amitabha Sarkar

Shri Anup Giri

